

Paper mill, history are interwoven

Never far from sight, sound nor mind, the influence of the manufacture of paper has been immense in Camas for more than 104 years.

The relationship dates back to May 12, 1883, when planning for the construction of the first Camas paper mill was initiated by the LaCamas Colony Co. Chief among the leaders of the mill construction was Henry L. Pittock, the owner of the Portland Oregonian. It is said the LaCamas Colony Co. decided on the mill location because of the site's proximity to water and an abundant nearby source of trees.

Crews began clearing land for construction of the mill in 1883 and in July, work began on a sawmill to provide lumber for the mill's construction. And when the Colony Co. filed articles of incorporation for the Columbia River Paper Co. in 1884, the age of paper making had finally taken hold in Camas.

Chinese laborers were hired to construct a ditch running from Lackamas Lake to bring water to the mill for powering the paper machines and for use in making paper. For more than 18 months, the mill site abounded with activity — until Nov. 6, 1886, when the mill was totally destroyed in a fire.

Reconstruction was begun quickly, however. On May 3, 1888, the mill was back in production on an even bigger scale than before.

In 1905, the Columbia River Paper Co. of Camas and the Crown Paper Co., of West Linn, Ore., merged to form Crown Columbia Paper Co. With this expansion, changes began to take place, including the construction of a bag factory. By 1907, a full-scale expansion program was under way.

Over the next few years, significant changes were made in the mill's steam plant. But in 1913, one of the greatest changes to date took place as the mill began to switch from steam power to electric powered operation. The conversion was not immediate. By 1917, all but six steam engines had been replaced with electric motors. And in 1920, with a vast supply of hog fuel being available, the remaining steam engines were equipped with new furnaces.



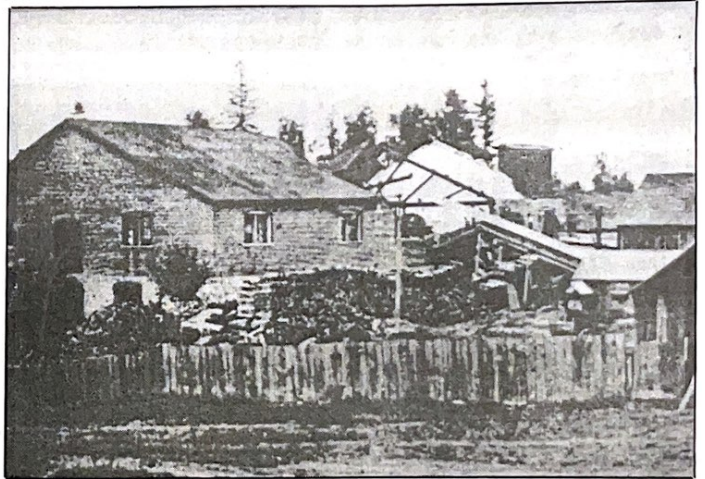
AN EARLY photo of Henry Pittock's paper mill. The mill was started to make paper for The Oregonian newspaper.

Changes in the mill's family of ownership also continued.

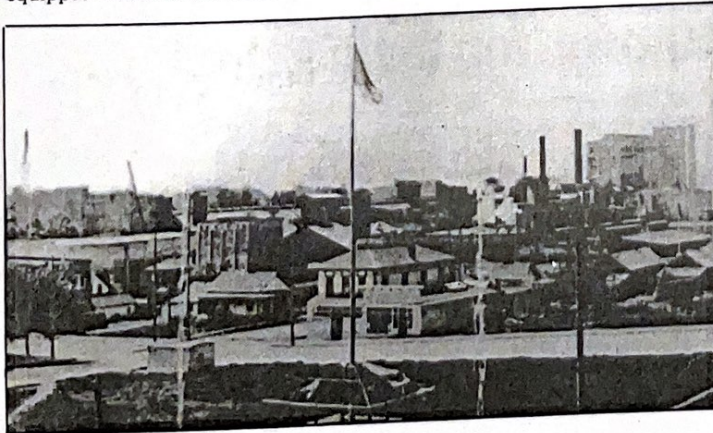
Crown Willamette Paper Co. was formed in 1914 as a series of mergers occurred between Columbia Paper Co. and Lebanon and Willamette paper companies. Through mergers, the firm had grown to form the world's second largest paper manufacturing.

In 1928, Crown Willamette merged with Zellerbach Paper Co. of San Francisco to form Crown Zellerbach Corp. The marriage was a good one for decades, as the firm invested tens of millions of dollars in mill expansion and improvements in efforts to increase production tonnage and improve the quality and diversity of products made in Camas.

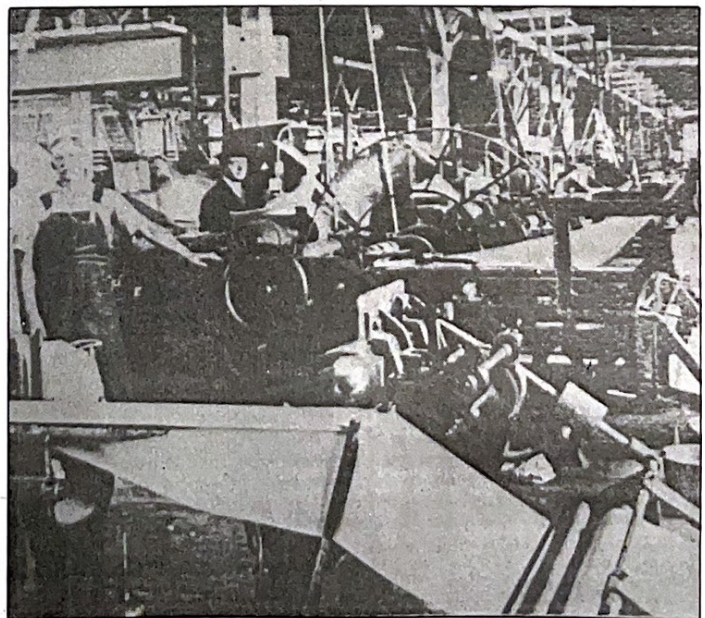
In Spring 1985, Anglo-French financier Sir James Goldsmith successfully acquired more than 50 percent of Crown Zellerbach. As a series of attempts were made to restructure the company and fend Goldsmith off, James River, a Virginia based coporation came on the scene. A deal was struck between James River and Crown Zellerbach for the Camas mill, but Goldsmith succeeded in his effort to acquire CZ's lucrative timber assets.



A PHOTO showing the mill's wood yard.



VIEW OF mill from a nearby hillside.



EARLY MACHINERY used to make paper.